

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

CARLOS GONZALEZ-VARGAS,
Defendant.

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CRIMINAL NO. 4:23-CR-374

PLEA AGREEMENT

The United States of America, by and through Nicholas J. Ganjei, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Texas, and Stuart Tallichet, Assistant United States Attorney, and the defendant, Carlos Gonzalez-Vargas (“Defendant”), and Defendant’s counsel, pursuant to Rule 11(c)(1)(A) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, state that they have entered into an agreement, the terms and conditions of which are as follows:

Defendant’s Agreement

1. Defendant agrees to plead guilty to Count Two of the indictment. Count Two charges Defendant with discharge of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c)(1)(A)(iii). Defendant, by entering this plea, agrees that he is waiving any right to have the facts that the law makes essential to the punishment either charged in the indictment, or proved to a jury or proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

Punishment Range

2. The **statutory** maximum penalty for each violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c)(1)(A)(iii), is imprisonment of not less than 10 years and a fine of not more than \$250,000. Additionally, Defendant may receive a term of supervised release after imprisonment of not more than 5 years. *See* Title 18, United States Code, Sections 3559(a)(1) and 3583(b)(1). Defendant acknowledges and understands that if he should violate the conditions of any period of

supervised release which may be imposed as part of his sentence, then Defendant may be imprisoned for not more than 5 years, without credit for time already served on the term of supervised release prior to such violation. *See* Title 18, United States Code, Sections 3559(a)(1) and 3583(e)(3).

3. Defendant understands that the sentence on Count Two must be imposed to run consecutively to any other sentence. Defendant understands that he cannot have the imposition or execution of the sentence suspended, nor is he eligible for parole.

Mandatory Special Assessment

4. Pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 3013(a)(2)(A), immediately after sentencing, Defendant will pay to the Clerk of the United States District Court a special assessment in the amount of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) per count of conviction. The payment will be by cashier's check or money order, payable to the Clerk of the United States District Court, c/o District Clerk's Office, P.O. Box 61010, Houston, Texas 77208, Attention: Finance.

Immigration Consequences

5. Defendant recognizes that pleading guilty may have consequences with respect to his immigration status. Defendant understands that if he is not a citizen of the United States, by pleading guilty he may be removed from the United States, denied citizenship, and denied admission to the United States in the future. Defendant understands that if he is a naturalized United States citizen, pleading guilty may result in immigration consequences, such as denaturalization and potential deportation or removal from the United States. Defendant's attorney has advised Defendant of the potential immigration consequences resulting from Defendant's plea

of guilty, and Defendant affirms that he wants to plead guilty regardless of any immigration consequences that may result from the guilty plea and conviction.

Waiver of Appeal, Collateral Review, and Statute of Limitations

6. Defendant is aware that Title 28, United States Code, Section 1291, and Title 18, United States Code, Section 3742, afford a defendant the right to appeal the conviction and sentence imposed. Defendant is also aware that Title 28, United States Code, Section 2255, affords the right to contest or “collaterally attack” a conviction or sentence after the judgment of conviction and sentence has become final. Defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives the right to appeal or “collaterally attack” the conviction and sentence, except that Defendant does not waive the right to raise a claim of ineffective assistance of counsel on direct appeal, if otherwise permitted, or on collateral review in a motion under Title 28, United States Code, Section 2255. In the event Defendant files a notice of appeal following the imposition of the sentence or later collaterally attacks his conviction or sentence, the United States will assert its rights under this agreement and seek specific performance of these waivers.

7. Defendant also agrees that should the conviction following the defendant’s plea of guilty pursuant to this Agreement be vacated for any reason, then any prosecution that is not time-barred by the applicable statute of limitations on the date of the signing of this agreement (including any counts that the United States has agreed to dismiss at sentencing pursuant to this Agreement) may be commenced or reinstated against the defendant, notwithstanding the expiration of the statute of limitations between the signing of this Agreement and the commencement or reinstatement of such prosecution. It is the intent of this Agreement to waive

all defenses based on the statute of limitations with respect to any prosecution that is not time-barred on the date that this Agreement is signed.

8. In agreeing to these waivers, Defendant is aware that a sentence has not yet been determined by the Court. Defendant is also aware that any estimate of the possible sentencing range under the sentencing guidelines that he may have received from his counsel, the United States or the Probation Office, is a prediction and not a promise, did not induce his guilty plea, and is not binding on the United States, the Probation Office or the Court. The United States does not make any promise or representation concerning what sentence the defendant will receive. Defendant further understands and agrees that the United States Sentencing Guidelines are “effectively advisory” to the Court. *See United States v. Booker*, 543 U.S. 220 (2005). Accordingly, Defendant understands that, although the Court must consult the Sentencing Guidelines and must take them into account when sentencing Defendant, the Court is not bound to follow the Sentencing Guidelines nor sentence Defendant within the calculated guideline range.

9. Defendant understands and agrees that each and all waivers contained in the Agreement are made in exchange for the concessions made by the United States in this plea agreement.

The United States’ Agreements

10. The United States agrees to each of the following:

(a) If Defendant pleads guilty to Count Two of the indictment and persists in that plea through sentencing, and if the Court accepts this plea agreement, the United States will dismiss Count One after sentencing and not bring additional charges arising out of the charged conduct. The defendant agrees that with respect to any and all dismissed charges he is not a ‘prevailing party within the meaning of the ‘Hyde Amendment,’ Section 617, P.L. 105-119 (Nov. 26, 1997), and will not file any claim under that law;

(b) If the Court determines that Defendant qualifies for an adjustment under U.S.S.G. § 3E1.1(a), and the offense level prior to operation of § 3E1.1(a) is 16 or greater, the United States will move under § 3E1.1(b) for an additional one-level reduction because Defendant timely notified authorities of his or her intent to plead guilty, thereby permitting the United States to avoid preparing for trial and permitting the United States and the Court to allocate their resources more efficiently.

Agreement Binding - Southern District of Texas Only

11. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas agrees that it will not further criminally prosecute Defendant in the Southern District of Texas for the specific conduct described in the indictment. This plea agreement binds only the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas and Defendant. It does not bind any other United States Attorney's Office. The United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas will bring this plea agreement and the full extent of Defendant's cooperation to the attention of other prosecuting offices, if requested.

United States' Non-Waiver of Appeal

12. The United States reserves the right to carry out its responsibilities under guidelines sentencing. Specifically, the United States reserves the right:

- (a) to bring the facts of this case, including evidence in the files of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas or the files of any investigative agency, to the attention of the Probation Office in connection with that office's preparation of a presentence report;
- (b) to set forth or dispute sentencing factors or facts material to sentencing;
- (c) to seek resolution of such factors or facts in conference with Defendant's counsel and the Probation Office;
- (d) to file a pleading relating to these issues, in accordance with section 6A1.2 of the United States Sentencing Guidelines and Title 18, United States Code, Section 3553(a); and

- (e) to appeal the sentence imposed or the manner in which it was determined.

Sentence Determination

13. Defendant is aware that the sentence will be imposed after consideration of the United States Sentencing Guidelines and Policy Statements, which are only advisory, as well as the provisions of Title 18, United States Code, Section 3553(a). Defendant nonetheless acknowledges and agrees that the Court has authority to impose any sentence up to and including the statutory maximum set for the offenses to which Defendant pleads guilty, and that the sentence to be imposed is within the sole discretion of the sentencing judge after the Court has consulted the applicable Sentencing Guidelines. Defendant understands and agrees that the parties' positions regarding the application of the Sentencing Guidelines do not bind the Court and that the sentence imposed is within the discretion of the sentencing judge. If the Court should impose any sentence up to the maximum established by statute, or should the Court order any or all of the sentences imposed to run consecutively, Defendant cannot, for that reason alone, withdraw a guilty plea, and will remain bound to fulfill all of the obligations under this plea agreement.

Rights at Trial

14. Defendant understands that by entering into this agreement, he surrenders certain rights as provided in this plea agreement. Defendant understands that the rights of a defendant include the following:

- (a) If Defendant persisted in a plea of not guilty to the charges, defendant would have the right to a speedy jury trial with the assistance of counsel. The trial may be conducted by a judge sitting without a jury if Defendant, the United States, and the court all agree.
- (b) At a trial, the United States would be required to present witnesses and other evidence against Defendant. Defendant would have the opportunity to confront those witnesses and his attorney would be allowed to cross-examine them. In turn, Defendant could, but would not be required to, present witnesses and other

evidence on his own behalf. If the witnesses for Defendant would not appear voluntarily, he could require their attendance through the subpoena power of the court; and

(c) At a trial, Defendant could rely on a privilege against self-incrimination and decline to testify, and no inference of guilt could be drawn from such refusal to testify. However, if Defendant desired to do so, he could testify on his own behalf.

Factual Basis for Guilty Plea

15. Defendant is pleading guilty because he is in fact guilty of the charges contained in Count Two of the indictment. If this case were to proceed to trial, the United States could prove each element of the offense beyond a reasonable doubt. The following facts, among others would be offered to establish Defendant's guilt:

16. On January 16, 2023, four masked males robbed the Family Dollar store located at 11046 Airline Drive, Houston, Southern District of Texas ("Family Dollar"). The robbery was captured on video by the Family Dollar's video surveillance. One of the masked males uses a black firearm to threaten the Family Dollar's employees while demanding money from the register. When the employee is unable to open the register quickly enough, the gunman discharges the firearm, shooting an employee in the leg. The four masked males take approximately \$233.81 from the cash register of the Family Dollar and then flee. The \$233.81 belonged to the Family Dollar and is used in the course of its business. The Family Dollar's video surveillance shows the masked gunman wearing a distinctive pair of sneakers. Law enforcement collected the spent shell casing from the gunshot at the scene of the robbery.

17. On February 19, 2023, the Defendant, Carlos Gonzalez-Vargas, was arrested by the Houston Police Department in an unrelated event. During the arrest, the Defendant was wearing the same distinctive sneakers as the masked gunman in the robbery and the Defendant was in

possession of a black firearm that is very similar in appearance to the firearm used by the masked gunman in the robbery.

18. A firearms expert at the Houston Forensic Science Center examined the spent shell casing collected at the robbery scene and the firearm recovered from the Defendant. The firearms expert will testify that a forensic analysis shows that the shell casing recovered from the Family Dollar was fired in the firearm recovered from the Defendant.

19. A law enforcement officer examined the shoes that the Defendant was wearing at the time of his arrest. The officer will testify that the shoes have the same distinctive color scheme and also have unique damage to both shoes that is visible on the gunman's shoes in the Family Dollar's surveillance video.

20. A law enforcement officer interviewed the Defendant after his arrest. The officer will testify that the Defendant admitted that he was the gunman who robbed the Family Dollar and shot the employee. The officer will testify that the Defendant identified himself in the Family Dollar surveillance video as the masked gunman.

21. The Family Dollar employee who was shot will testify that the robbers threatened her to get money and shot her when the register did not open quickly enough.

22. Finally, an employee of the Family Dollar will testify that on January 16, 2023, the Family Dollar store located at 11046 Airline Drive, Houston, Southern District of Texas, ("Family Dollar") was a Chesapeake, Virginia based variety store chain with locations throughout the United States. The Family Dollar was engaged in the retail business of buying and selling perishable and non-perishable goods and transacting in United States currency, all of which travel

in and affect interstate commerce. The Defendant obstructed and affected the regular course of the Family Dollar's business by stealing the \$233.81.

Breach of Plea Agreement

23. If Defendant should fail in any way to fulfill completely all of the obligations under this plea agreement, the United States will be released from its obligations under the plea agreement, and Defendant's plea and sentence will stand. If at any time Defendant retains, conceals, or disposes of assets in violation of this plea agreement, including required financial information, or if Defendant knowingly withholds evidence or is otherwise not completely truthful with the United States, then the United States may move the Court to set aside the guilty plea and reinstate prosecution. Any information and documents that have been disclosed by Defendant, whether prior to or subsequent to this plea agreement, and all leads derived therefrom, will be used against defendant in any prosecution.

Monetary Penalties, Assets and Financial Disclosures

24. Defendant understands and agrees that monetary penalties will be subject to immediate enforcement as provided in 18 U.S.C. § 3613 and that monetary penalties will be submitted to the Treasury Offset Program so that payments to the Defendant may be applied to federal debts.

25. Defendant understands that restitution, forfeiture, and fines are separate components of sentencing and are separate obligations. Defendant agrees to take all steps necessary to pass clear title to forfeitable assets to the United States and to assist fully in the collection of restitution and fines. Subject to the provisions of paragraph 6 above, Defendant waives the right to challenge

in any manner, including by direct appeal or in a collateral proceeding, any restitution order, any forfeiture orders, and any fines.

Restitution

26. Defendant agrees to pay full restitution to the victim(s) regardless of the count(s) of conviction. Defendant stipulates and agrees that as a result of his criminal conduct, the victim(s) incurred a monetary loss of at least \$233.81. Defendant agrees to pay full restitution as determined by the Court, regardless of the resulting loss amount, to all victims harmed by Defendant's "relevant conduct," as defined by U.S.S.G. §1B1.3, including conduct pertaining to any dismissed counts or uncharged conduct, and regardless of whether such conduct constitutes an "offense" under 18 U.S.C. §§ 2259, 3663 or 3663A. Defendant agrees that restitution imposed by the Court will be due and payable immediately and that should the Court impose a payment schedule, the payment schedule sets forth minimum payments and does not foreclose additional collection of restitution.


Complete Agreement

27. This written plea agreement, consisting of 13 pages, including the attached addendum of Defendant and his attorney, constitutes the complete plea agreement between the United States, Defendant, and Defendant's counsel. Other than any written proffer agreement(s) that may have been entered into between the United States and Defendant, this agreement supersedes any prior understandings, promises, agreements, or conditions between the United States and Defendant. No additional understandings, promises, agreements, or conditions have been entered into other than those set forth in this agreement, and none will be entered into unless in writing and signed by all

parties. Defendant acknowledges that no threats have been made against him/her and that he is pleading guilty freely and voluntarily because he is guilty.

28. Any modification of this plea agreement must be in writing and signed by all parties.

Filed at Feb 7, Texas, on Houston Tx, 2025



Carlos Gonzalez-Vargas
Defendant

Subscribed and sworn to before me on 2-7-, 2025

NATHAN KYLE OCHSNER
UNITED STATES DISTRICT CLERK

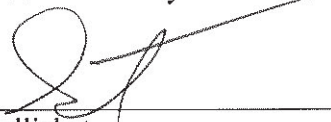
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Deputy United States District Clerk

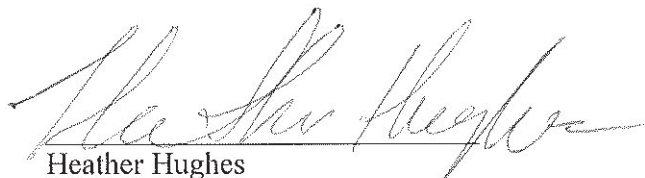
APPROVED:

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United States Attorney

By:



Stuart Tallichet
Assistant United States Attorney
Southern District of Texas



Heather Hughes
Attorney for Defendant

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PLEA AGREEMENT -- ADDENDUM


I have fully explained to Defendant his rights with respect to the pending indictment. I have reviewed the provisions of the United States Sentencing Commission's Guidelines Manual and Policy Statements and I have fully and carefully explained to Defendant the provisions of those Guidelines which may apply in this case. I have also explained to Defendant that the Sentencing Guidelines are only advisory and the court may sentence Defendant up to the maximum allowed by statute per count of conviction. I have also explained to Defendant that sentences on multiple counts may be imposed to run consecutively to one another or to any other sentence. Further, I have carefully reviewed every part of this plea agreement with Defendant. To my knowledge, Defendant's decision to enter into this agreement is an informed and voluntary one.


Heather Hughes
Attorney for Defendant

2-7-25
Date

I have consulted with my attorney and fully understand all my rights with respect to the indictment pending against me. My attorney has fully explained, and I understand, all my rights with respect to the provisions of the United States Sentencing Commission's Guidelines Manual which may apply in my case. I have read and carefully reviewed every part of this plea agreement

with my attorney. I understand this agreement and I voluntarily agree to its terms.



Carlos Gonzalez-Vargas
Defendant



Date